South Carolina 2021 Rural Broadband Grant Program
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Rev. May 20, 2021

Q: Would it benefit us to break the proposed areas into multiple projects and applications or would ORS prefer us to submit a single application for all areas/projects?

A: Application split is ultimately up to the Applicant; however, we offer a couple of notes for consideration:

If you plan to apply for **Eligible Counties** as well as **Contiguous Counties,** you may want to consider two applications because support is limited in **Contiguous Counties**. Therefore, depending on the overall volume of submissions, we may not be able to offer much support to Contiguous Counties and it will be helpful to ORS have these segregated during grant evaluation.

Additionally, from an engineering perspective, you may choose to apply for a project(s) that is self-contained. In other words, there may be some projects that only make sense in an "all or nothing" mode. These would also be good candidates for separate applications.

Q: For one of our projects, we must build from a Contiguous County to reach an Eligible County. Should we submit one application or two?

A: The Applicant is welcome to submit one or two applications; however, in this case, a single application for this project is likely the best answer. From an engineering perspective, this project won't likely make much sense in two separate applications. Further, the overall project will likely score more points during grant evaluation due to strategic impact.

Q: One of our projects rests partly in a Contiguous County and a small portion is in an ineligible county. Will the piece in the ineligible county be an issue?

A: The Applicant is welcome to request funding in the Contiguous County; however, the small piece in the ineligible county should be removed from the application. Applications which include any project area outside of Eligible or Contiguous Counties will be eliminated from consideration.

Q: Is the requirement to use non-public funds for a match intended to prevent counties and municipalities from participating in the 2021 Rural Broadband Grant Program? Are cooperatives public entities? Are funds from USDA considered public?

A: Funding for the 2021 Rural Broadband Grant Program was made available by an appropriation from the SC General Assembly to the SC Department of Commerce (SCDOC) through Proviso 50.21 of the General Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2019-20. In Jan. 2021, the Joint Bond Review Committee (JBRC) approved the allocation of $30M for the Rural Broadband Grant Program to be developed and implemented by ORS, in coordination with SCDOC. Further, the JBRC stipulated that grant recipients provide a 1:1 match of non-public

funds for any projects receiving grant funds. No intent was expressed to prevent counties and municipalities from participating.

No, cooperatives are not considered public entities.

Yes, USDA funds are considered public funds since they come from the federal government.

Q: Will ORS be releasing challenges made by other providers?

A: ORS will not be making challenge information public for the 2021 Rural Broadband Grant Program; however, we will utilize all information received, together with our most-recent data (FCC and Ookla Speedtest Intelligence) to make the best informed grant decisions.

Application-specific comments may be submitted in writing to broadband@ors.sc.gov until June 1, 2021.

Q: Will ORS be releasing application-specific GIS shape files?

A: Yes. Project-specific shape files will be made available to interested parties on a case-by-case basis. However, please note that these shape files may require specialized software licenses and technical expertise to be viewed. ORS cannot provide technical support or assistance with these files. Please contact broadband@ors.sc.gov.